



Are social networking sites contributing to depression and anxiety symptoms in young people?

By Dr. Jessica K Edwards

Earlier this year, Elena Marie Piteo and Kelly Ward conducted a systematic review to examine the relationship between social networking site (SNS) use and depression and anxiety symptoms in young people. Piteo and Ward searched four databases and retrieved peer-reviewed articles examining SNS use in young people (aged between 5 and 18 years) and mental health outcomes published between 2005 and 2019. After initially identifying 1,025 articles, they refined the list to 19 studies for further analysis. From these, they found some evidence for an association between more time spent using SNSs and higher levels of depressive and anxiety symptoms. However, the researchers urge caution as the effect size was small and they deemed many of the studies to be of poor quality due to methodological issues. Additionally, cause and effect cannot be inferred as most studies were cross-sectional. The researchers explain that well-designed, longitudinal studies are now needed to understand the mechanisms by which SNS might affect emotional regulation in young people.

Referring to:

Piteo, E.M. & Ward, K. (2020), *Review: Social networking sites and associations with depressive and anxiety symptoms in children and adolescents – a systematic review*. *Child Adolesc. Ment. Health*. doi: 10.1111/camh.12373.